Most discussions of disciplinarity start by claiming an emerging group as constituting a discipline or a profession and authorizing that group by locating appropriate research foci, programs for graduate education and undergraduate certification, professional societies, and central professional meetings. Our discussion examines the field of professional writing, focusing not so much on defining it as a discipline as on working out its curricular geography, an activity that will affect its status in both academy and industry. To that end, we explore the status of professional writing within the department of English by (a) briefly examining the problem of defining professional writing; *(b) reviewing several theoretical positions within English that have provided a status for professional writing—literature, rhetoric/composition, business and technical writing—to expose the competition for control of the term and to surface the implications of accepting these various groups on their own terms; and (c) considering the curricular status to which professional writing might aspire by sketching a geography that positions professional writing in a new space within English.*

Remapping Curricular Geography
Professional Writing in/and English

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> Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power. (Foucault, "Space" 252)

> *Domain* suggests the metaphor of a space one controls. From this point of view, defining the domain of composition amounts to negotiating a territorial claim with other disciplines over the responsibility that each has for a particular dimension of human life or mode of understanding it. (Phelps, "Domain" 182)

Our discussion attempts to articulate the space that professional writing currently occupies and to speculate about the space it might occupy within the department of English. As the title of the Foucault interview suggests ("Space"), space—that is, physical, geographical space, not just intellectual positioning—is an essential feature of communal identity. Articulating a space is always an act of hubris and

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an exercise of power, and in academic disciplinary communities, such articulations require establishing a distinct archaeology of knowledge (Foucault, *Archaeology*). Foucault argues that space, knowledge, and power are intertwined—and that they are unavoidable. Arguments about territory always involve struggle among competing ideologies for control of the terrain and of the knowledge that constitutes that terrain.

In this discussion, we explore some of the struggles over the terrain of professional writing, a relatively new space now intruding on several well-established territories within the department of English—literature, rhetoric/composition, and business and technical writing—attempting to negotiate a space with those existing territories. Our method is similar to that used by Pierre Bourdieu in *Homo Academicus* and by Louise Wetherbee Phelps in *Composition as a Human Science* (see also Phelps, "Practical Wisdom"; Lyon): We are attempting to map the academic terrain that is and that ought to be professional writing, focusing on the theoretical implications of that struggle for academic space.

We start by briefly examining the problem of defining *professional writing*, a term whose meaning varies widely (Sullivan). Then we examine several key positions that have provided a status for professional writing within departments of English: literature, rhetoric/composition, and business and technical writing. We conducted our research by locating the groups' different uses of the term *professional writing*. We were interested in how these groups viewed professional writing: Was it an acceptable term? Did it have a clear, unique meaning, or was it a synonym for another term? Was it central to any of the groups? Did it have a history written by any of these groups? To determine the history of their views, we examined articles from major journals (published before 1992) that included the term in the title and collections of essays, textbooks, and publications on curriculum. We did not review individual program literature. By cataloging some of the various positions that professional writing has been assigned, we hope to expose the competition for control of the term and to surface the implications of accepting the various groups on their own terms. These differing assignments represent disagreements (although we prefer the term *negotiations*) about territory and space. We think of them as curricular geographies.

Finally, we consider the curricular status to which professional writing might aspire—in a sense, sketching a utopian version of the field that emerges partly from the common ground of existing con-

ceptions, yet does not exactly resemble any one of them. We argue finally for a space for professional writing as a distinctive field and as a separate-but-equal component within the department of English. In one sense, professional writing can already justify claiming such status: The existence of professional organizations and publications, an academic major, PhD specializations, jobs, and academicians who claim it as a research area are all signs of the existence of a thriving field. In another sense, the field's status is uneasy, maybe even unstable. Important questions remain as yet unanswered. Does professional writing refer to a humanities discipline or a technical/professional field? Is professional writing simply a new name for technical or business writing? Should the professional writing major be housed as a separate academic unit, remain in the department of English, be subordinate or equal to rhetoric/composition? What is its future? More important, what do we want its future to be? We want to suggest finally that this uneasiness, this indeterminacy, may signify a strength of the field rather than a weakness; its flexibility and dynamism (the positive side of indeterminacy) might be an asset rather than a problem to be solved.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION AND MULTIPLE MEANINGS

We should state from the outset that our aim is not to establish a single definition or disciplinary status for professional writing. In technical and business writing, the sole-definition battle has been fought repeatedly (Allen; Dobrin; Harris; Reinsch)—with mainly unsatisfactory results. Most participants in the "defining-the-discipline" struggle are aware of the problem: Reaching one definition usually runs counter to our collective empirical experience of technical and business writing as diverse multidisciplinary fields. Yet, to have a field, we need some sort of shared ground or identity; we need to be able to point to it and say, "There it is."

Rather than attempting to *define* professional writing, this article attempts to *locate* it. The difference is not insignificant. Defining a concept is a limiting activity; trying to establish a common meaning can have the effect of excluding enriching diversities. Locating professional writing is also exclusionary but in a different way. Rather than limiting us to a single notion, describing the field in terms of a general terrain encompassing several different spheres of activity can

maintain a dynamic pluralism and promote an interdisciplinary character that we feel will not only give us a better chance of achieving explanatory adequacy but will also, in the long run, be healthier for the field.

We can start with the commonplace that the term *professional writing* admits to multiple identities. But even more problematic is the fact that the term is used as shorthand in reference to at least three intertwined spheres of application:

1. professional writing as a research field
   a. primarily research investigating writing in the workplace (analogous to studying writing in various academic disciplines)
2. professional writing as a workplace activity
   b. writing done by anyone in business, industry, and government—that is, professionals who write
   c. writing done by designated writing specialists in business and industry—that is, professional or "career writers" (Couture 26)
3. professional writing as an academic curricular entity
   d. a course or courses offered, usually by the department of English, as a service to other disciplines in the university; often, loosely equated with business and/or technical writing
   e. an undergraduate writing major and/or a graduate field, often located in the department of English.

Traditionally, professional writing has meant (b) what people in business and industry produce and (d) a service course, such as business and technical writing, that prepares people to do writing in business and industry. Increasingly, professional writing is beginning to mean (a) a researchable field, (c) writing done by writing specialists, and (e) an undergraduate or graduate major program. The following discussion attempts to map in more detail this general shift.

THE STATUS OF PROFESSIONAL WRITING WITHIN VARIOUS DISCIPLINARY GEOGRAPHIES

Literature

The most traditional view of department geography sees the defining area of English as literary studies—and other areas as adjunct or service (see Figure 1). All nonliterary (or nonbelletristic) writing, professional writing included, has historically had an adjunct status in the department of English. That is not to say that the literature view

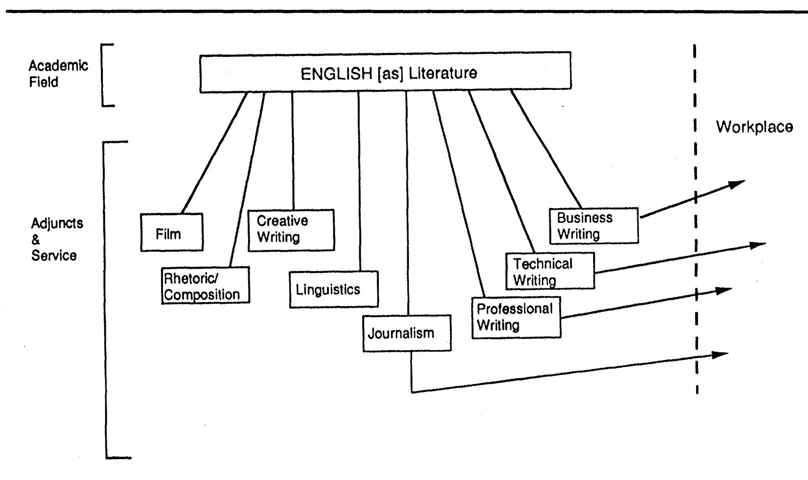

Figure 1. Traditional Literature View of English Department Curricular Geography

is not sometimes capable of appreciating the importance of professional and other forms of nonliterary writing—and even sometimes of making a space for it—but their importance is perceived primarily in their adjunct functions of credentialing English (i.e., literature) majors or generating FTE (full-time equivalency) through service to other disciplines.

That writing and writing instruction have had a secondary status within the development of the department of English has been well established by composition historians (see, for example, Stewart). In 1945, a report on "The English Language in American Education," written by the Committee of the Association's Commission on Trends in Education (Pollock), gives writing little publicly acknowledged place in an English curriculum. It talks of how courses and even departments of composition and speech have grown up over the half century and questions whether such courses or programs should have a place in a liberal arts curriculum. Its position is that the

> development of the professional arts of speaking and writing is . . . essentially a task of professional schools rather than liberal colleges, just as the development of fundamental linguistic abilities is the primary task of elementary and secondary schools. Writing and speaking should be used as tools in the liberal college. (153-54)

It links *professional* training in speaking and writing with professional schools (not the liberal ones that include English), and it links

fundamental education in speaking and writing with elementary and secondary schools, with writing skills incorporated into literature classes. From this view, neither professional writing nor composition is a suitable course for university English departments.

Departments of English have grown in a number of directions since that report, but writing and professional writing (when it has been mentioned) have remained adjunct. In 1959, the Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference on Basic Issues in the Teaching of English articulated a three-part program: literature, writing, and teacher training. This committee's position was that no elementary composition should be taught in college but that students should be allowed to take courses in "advanced composition, factual or creative as one chooses" (MLA 242). Although it does not mention professional writing, this report makes a legitimate space for writing in the English curriculum, particularly for advanced writing courses, even though it states that basic or first-year composition should not be taught at the college level.

In *The Anatomy of College English* (1973), a book-length survey of departments of English, Thomas Wilcox makes the case that because literature is the central mission of the English department, other programs housed in English are "adjunct," "service," or, in the case of freshman composition, "most vexacious" (59). Wilcox sees the growth in demand for literature as signaling a decrease in adjunct and service roles, except for freshman composition. Although he does not mention professional writing, Wilcox identifies as adjuncts journalism (32.5% of English departments offer courses in this), speech (28.9%), theater (3.6%), technical writing (32.9%), business writing (10.9%), and English as a second language (20%). About technical and business writing, he remarks:

> These are frankly identified as service courses designed to prepare students to communicate effectively in the worlds of technology, science, and commerce. They are devoted entirely to the analysis and composition of what is called (with unfortunate imprecision) "expository prose," and the values they foster are almost exclusively those of the professions they serve. Members of the departments who teach in these programs are often an embattled band who see themselves as slighted and their courses depreciated by their literary colleagues. . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that some teachers of technical and business writing who feel neglected have seceded from the Department of English to establish programs under the auspices of engineering, science, and business administration. (59)

Wilcox points to some interesting features of how the traditional literature perspective has viewed technical and business writing: as adjunct, as taking on values from outside the department—whether from the professions they serve or nonhumanities or workplace—as lumping themselves together into expository prose (which covers all advanced writing courses), and as isolating themselves from the rightful mission of English (i.e., literature and humanistic education).

We see signs that at the start of the 1980s adjuncts were more acceptable in English departments. In a special *ADE Bulletin* issue on the state of the discipline, Paul Hunter expresses bitterness about the enrollment and placement problems that English departments faced in the 1970s, but he also points to several bright spots that could be developed further—writing, internships, and quasi-literary areas, such as film studies. Hunter notes that many departments that "cut journalism and technical writing courses repented the impecunity of their ways" and are exploring new specialized courses (2). Although he urges departments to expand writing offerings, Hunter sees the teaching of those courses as having a downside: The number of people who want to teach writing courses is extremely limited, and he does not want composition graduate programs to proliferate as an answer to needing writing faculty.

Although the traditional view does provide a status and a meaning for professional writing, that status is an adjunct one. It grows out of a tolerance of advanced courses in writing, out of a need to run practical programs (such as internships) to give English majors more employment possibilities, and out of a willingness to promote the liberal arts. Professional writing, from an English department's perspective, is likely to be one of a few courses that can be added to an English (literature) major that makes the English major more marketable.

It is important to note that this view of professional writing has its proponents publishing *inside* professional writing. Brereton sketches what a professional writing program in an English department might include and demonstrates that view. Brereton applauds Carnegie Mellon University for starting a major in professional writing in the 1970s, but he undercuts the praise with a footnote that doubts the wisdom of placing students in such neat categories. That turn highlights the difference between a position taken in the English department tradition and one taken in a technical or business writing tradition. As some may note, Carnegie-Mellon started one of the first majors in technical writing and modeled its professional writing major after its technical writing major (technical writing courses,

internship, and technical minor), with the initial difference being a deletion of the technical minor (courses in document design were later added). Brereton sees this model of the professional writing major as turned directly toward industry, and he resists its technical/business approach. Instead, he highlights the liberal-arts dimension; advocates using advanced composition courses already in place, literature courses, and an internship (similar to Hunter's); and suggests adding other courses only when necessary.

Rhetoric/Composition

A now common alternative to the literature view sees English as more appropriately focused on the activities of reading and writing—and perhaps even more broadly, written language—from a variety of critical perspectives (Scholes; Atkins and Johnson). Although such a view still places high value on the study of literary works, it positions literary studies and other areas in one of several possible arrangements, two of which we would like to highlight here: (a) It might situate literary studies as one of several separate-but-equal components (along with, perhaps, creative writing, rhetoric/composition, and linguistics) within a pluralistic English department; or (b) it might place rhetoric theory or literary theory, or perhaps even just *theory*, in the position of authority over several spheres of application, professional writing among them (see Kinneavy).

Within these views, professional writing can occupy one of several positions. It can exist as one of the separate-but-equal fields (as we represent it later in Figure 3)—or it can be subordinate to rhetoric/composition, sharing part of the space of advanced composition. Within this latter framework (illustrated in Figure 2), rhetoric/composition provides explanatory theory for professional writing, which represents an application (or practice) of that theory within the workplace.

There is a well-established tradition of seeing professional writing as a component of advanced writing, and/or as a component of writing across the curriculum, and/or as a particular application of rhetoric theory. This general relationship can be configured in different ways. Aligning itself with humanist values and against scientific ones, an emerging composition tradition for professional writing in the 1980s sees it as an advanced writing course, normally a service course related to writing-across-the-curriculum courses, that meets the "real world" writing needs of varied disciplines. This view was

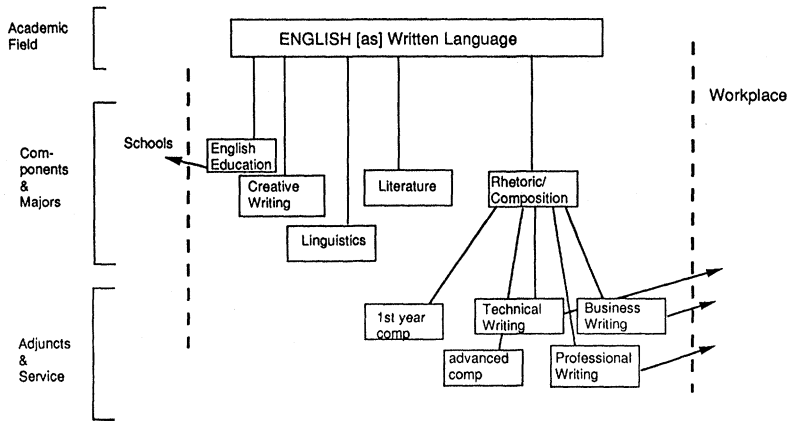

Figure 2. Rhetoric/Composition View of Curricular Geography

fostered and reinforced by surveys published by Bataille in *College Composition and Communication* and by Faigley and Miller in *College English*. Both surveys use evidence from the workplace to talk about the importance and the diversity of writing in the workplace; results suggest that specialized training in writing is not needed as much as sound advanced general writing courses (see Knoblauch). Such first-hand evidence could be used with faculty in other disciplines to underscore the need for less-specialized instruction in writing.

Curricularly, this point had already been made in a group of articles on advanced writing and writing in the professions that appeared in the *Journal of Advanced Composition* in 1980. Halpern, Mathes, and Stevenson (all of whom were, at the time, in the Humanities Department of the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan) authored these pieces that connect advanced writing and writing in other professions. Halpern identifies five components essential to any advanced composition course, be it technical writing, business writing, journalism, or academic writing. Mathes argues that three types of advanced writing classes should be developed to meet the needs of students entering varied roles in society. Stevenson points to the importance of teaching rhetorical approaches to students in technical and professional programs. Only Halpern assembles a list of equivalent courses, a list of courses that later is a clear list of the synonyms for professional writing in the composition tradition.

By 1985, when *College Composition and Communication* devoted two of its issues to writing in the disciplines, the composition view of professional writing had calcified. In the first issue, Faigley and Hansen discuss two aims of current programs: the "professional" aim, which trains students to imitate professional writing in the field, and the "liberal arts" aim, which encourages students to explore issues in the subject matter of the disciplines (141). Faigley and Hansen point to problems with both views, but the linkage of *professional* with *imitation* and *liberal* with *exploration* is one that is not challenged by Faigley and Hansen; indeed, it lurks beneath the surface of much writing-across-the-curriculum literature. The second issue focuses attention on writing in scientific and technical fields. Only one of the authors, Elizabeth Tebeaux, is recognizably in technical communication; the others are in writing across the curriculum. Tebeaux, too, is the only author who places *professional writing* in the title of her essay, "Redesigning Professional Writing Courses to Meet the Communication Needs of Writers in Business and Industry," using professional writing to refer to business, technical, and scientific writing. Tebeaux argues for a collapsing of the rigid distinctions between these courses in an effort to create a broader, more heterogeneous course (i.e., professional writing).

Although Tebeaux's approach might appear to create a course that would come out of the technical and business traditions and yet fit into the composition tradition's aim to produce generalized advanced writing instruction for a number of disciplines, unease with that approach is voiced in the writing journals. Kathleen Kelly, for example, poses a dilemma that arises when English departments "offer business or technical writing [and that] often means excluding more traditional humanities subjects in professional writing forms" (235). Kate Ronald talks of faculty uncertainty about how to deal with this relatively new and popular course, constructing this history:

> Professional writing classes are the most specialized incarnation of the current writing-across-the-curriculum movement. Here, the students do not survey the range of academic disciplines; rather, they concentrate on writing in the fields they have chosen to enter. Many of them are already working writers. . . . These students come into the course expecting to learn on-the-job writing, and they demand access to the codes, formats, and etiquette of special fields. . . . My dilemma results: am I helping students get jobs and promotions or am I helping them become critical thinkers who can change and improve their professions? (23-24)

Ronald constructs a tradition for professional writing that has writing across the curriculum birthing a course that is more humanities centered, more liberal, more ethically geared, and broader than business and technical writing courses. However, the students resist and ask for job-oriented skills. Her portrait is complicated and undercut by recent articles in composition journals. *The Writing Instructor*'s 1990 issue on business and technical writing instruction (which, admittedly, is not focused on professional writing) mixes the terms *business, technical, professional, pre-professional,* and *writing across the curriculum* liberally and almost interchangeably (Landis). It is not clear that the professional writing course is only a writing-across-the-curriculum course that has supplanted or is supplanting business and technical writing.

The suspicion of technical aims continues to percolate. Thomas Miller, in a 1991 *Journal of Advanced Composition* article, aligns technical writing with impoverished *techne* and mere rhetoric at the same time as he connects professional writing with *phronesis* and *praxis* in an attempt to provide a philosophical basis for a questionable, although common, division:

> While this may sound like a terribly idealistic and theoretical way to think about technical and business writing, the point is that we cannot be both technicians of the word and humanists because there is a basic contradiction between teaching writing as a technique of information processing and teaching writing as a negotiation of shared values and knowledge. (70)

Miller articulates once again the unease over professional writing that composition and English views voice when they surface a binary between technical and humanist views. By framing the critical choice as one between humanistic values and scientistic or technocratic ones, the speakers are making a space for a notion of professional writing that is not aligned with traditional technical or business writing courses. Technical and business writing are, then, often perceived as advanced writing for, respectively, engineering and business/management. The general principles of rhetoric, applied at a slightly higher level of performance, provide the authorizing theory for all advanced writing.

Rhetoric theory is and certainly has been an important source of authority in technical communication, as Roger Masse and Martha Delamater Benz demonstrate in their detailed bibliographic review of research exploring connections between rhetoric and technical communication. And one sign of a curricular linkage between professional

writing and rhetoric/composition, at least at the doctoral, if not the undergraduate, level, is the development of PhD programs linking the areas (for example, at Iowa State University and New Mexico State University, the PhD in rhetoric and professional communication). But how are the two areas linked? The view we critique here sees rhetoric as providing the theory and professional writing as merely one of several practices of rhetoric (parallel to practices such as composition, science writing, social science writing, etc.). It sees professional writing as the practice of rhetoric theory within the workplace context (and, analogously, composition as the application of theory within the academic context). That is, the principles derive from rhetoric theory; technical or business communication is the art of examining how those principles might be applied in particular workplace contexts (see Flower; Corbett).

Business and Technical Writing

Although business and technical writing have been viewed suspiciously because of their attention (and suspected allegiance) to the professions and the workplace (Wilcox; Kelly; T. Miller), these courses have thrived in English departments. Many formal statements announce that the place of business and technical writing in English departments is one of service to the professional schools, but MLA surveys in 1983-1984 and 1986 cite technical communication as the highest growth area for English majors. Bettina Huber reports that in 1983-1984, technical communication was "the least commonly offered graduate and undergraduate English degree program" (151)—and yet that survey also reports that "three-fifths (63%) of all English departments offer undergraduate courses in technical communication, while close to a third (31%) have degree programs" (173). The 1986 MLA survey, of English doctoral programs, reports that even though only a few English departments award the PhD in technical communication (only 3% of the respondents), 23% offer at least one graduate technical writing course (139). More interesting, technical communication is reported as the highest growth area for English: Seventy-two percent of the respondents cited growth in the undergraduate area, 83% of them growth at the graduate level (compared to 50% reporting growth for creative writing, 37% for the English major) (see also Werner, Thompson, and Rothschild). In a different sector, evidence of the connection between English and technical

communication is found in the demographic reports of the membership of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). In 1971, 15% of the STC members had majored in English, with 40% lacking a four-year degree. By 1988, the percentage of members majoring in English or technical communication (a category collapsed by STC) had grown to 65%, but the percentage of members without a four-year degree had shrunk to 8%. Clearly, that group is experiencing a shift to four-year degrees as a requirement, and that shift centrally involves majors in English and in technical communication.

The place of the term *professional writing* in the literature of both business and technical writing is tied more to what happens in a profession and tied less to a service-course identity, which both of the other terms retain. Because both business and technical writing have had pedagogical journals for close to 20 years, and because both groups agree that the first course should be a service course, the space made for professional writing as a service course in English departments is already taken by these two prominent service courses (see Russell for history). Professional writing, then, has a more career-oriented meaning for both groups; it has traditionally been used to mean (a) communication of professionals (both use it simply to refer to writing and speaking activities of professionals) and (b) communication in the professions (in workplace research, it cues business and technical writers that a piece of research is common to both groups' interests). In addition, business writing has used the term *professional writing* somewhat more acceptingly in pedagogical discussions.

We can easily spot that first sense of *professional writing* and *professional communication* in technical writing literature. In 1963, for example, Herman Estrin's collection *Technical and Professional Writing* included articles about technical writing for professionals who needed to improve their writing. For Estrin, *professional writing* means about the same thing that it does in the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, namely the writing and communication tasks that professionals perform in their lines of work. The second meaning in the literature, as a term for reporting workplace research that is of interest to both groups, can be found in articles such as Nancy Roundy Blyler's reports on the study of purpose in a number of disciplines ("Process-Based Pedagogy," "Components of Purpose," "Purpose and Professional Writers"). When used to introduce research, the term signals work that speaks to the common ground between the two groups. Blyler's placement of the study and her use of the terms

professional writing and *professional communication* demonstrate her conviction that business and technical writing are in many ways allied ("Theory and Curriculum"). Because workplace research is becoming increasingly important to both groups, there is ever more common ground. Throughout the 1980s we saw *business* and *technical* being joined in the titles of texts and collections of articles. More often the terms are being yoked, a notable example being this journal, the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication.*

In the third area, pedagogy, there is less overlap of the term *professional* into articles on technical or business classroom topics. In 1987, Jimmie Killingsworth and Scott Sanders published an article on portfolios for majors in technical communication and *professional communication* (the *IEEE* term), the sole pedagogical article from *The Technical Writing Teacher* using professional communication to stand in for technical communication in its title. They advise: "Our experiences suggest that majors in technical communication and professional writing would be wise to prepare a portfolio of writing and artwork samples before they enter the job market" (166). Clearly, Killingsworth and Sanders know of majors in professional writing and judge them to be related to majors in technical communication. The term *professional writing* is linked to pedagogy more frequently in the business communication journals, however. Although many of these journals promote professionalism, *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication* has sponsored a number of curricular discussions of professional writing in the 1980s. Discussions of collaborative composing, an important topic to that journal, often mention professional writing as well.

Myra Kogen's *Writing in the Business Professions* displays how intertwined business, technical, and professional writing have become. She has four advisory editors, three of whom are well-established technical communication faculty. The first sentence of her introduction asserts: "This book on writing in the business professions is part of a general wave of interest in an exciting new discipline usually called professional writing or business communication" (ix). In this articulation, Kogen seems to be viewing professional writing as the historical development of business writing. She goes on to point to a wide variety of courses with particular points of view, "namely, that professional communication, communication undertaken in the service of business or government or industry or the professions, is worthy of analysis and study as is, say, expository writing, or journal-

ism, or literature" (xiii). She entertains the question of whether these groups constitute one discipline or several, observing that "certain scholars argue that professional writing, having no rhetorical method of its own, is not a discipline but merely a subfield of composition. Others believe," she continues, "that professional writing is actually made up of two disciplines: business writing . . . and technical writing" (xiii). Kogen further questions whether professional writing exists on its own, apart from composition, answering that those working in the field believe it does. And that is the argument she finds most convincing as a justification for breaking with composition. In her final position, however, Kogen claims that it is not yet clear whether business writing and technical writing are "two disciplines or two aspects of one discipline," speculating that it certainly makes sense to see them as united. Unfortunately (in Kogen's view), historical traditions, journals, texts, courses, and associations keep them apart (xiv).

There is other evidence in the essay, however, that Kogen sees professional writing and business communication as being interchangeable terms. She concludes: "In this book the term business communication is being interpreted very broadly to encompass all aspects of professional writing, including organizational communication, legal and other career writing, and even technical writing" (xiv). This comment, when put in the perspective of the sections of her collection (process in professional writing; writing in corporations, government, the law, and academia; teaching professional writing; surveying professional writing programs), suggests a very broad scope. But the articles in the collection do not so convincingly display such an attitude. The surveys section, as an example, contains a traditional business communication course survey and Brereton's article on professional writing programs inside of English departments.

Responses to Kogen's book are enlightening as well. In *Management Communication Quarterly*, Susan Becker asserts that the book focuses on the writing component of management. She praises the volume for attempting to aid in business communication's attempt to become a respectable discipline and also for taking a broad perspective. John Hagge, on the other hand, criticizes the appearance of articles on technical writing, advanced composition, and legal writing in a collection on business communication. He suspects the editor of selling out the traditional needs and concerns of business communication teachers.

Kogen is not alone in puzzling through relationships among business, technical, and/or professional writing/communication. Couture talks of the genre "technical/professional writing"—which refers to work done by "career writers" and which, for her, differs from the categories of "engineering writing" and "administrative writing" (26). Couture sees technical/professional writers as committed primarily to language—more specifically, to readability. For her, the notion of readability is the operative focus. Charles Sides conflates the terms at times in his bibliographical collection. His collection is entitled *Technical and Business Communication*—and yet it excludes business communication in its two major divisions: "Issues and Abilities in Technical Communication" and "Genres in Technical Communication." Sides's introduction to the volume reveals that the emphasis is clearly technical communication (which is, he says, "a vibrant academic field"), although he does hope that it will provide "teachers of technical and business communication" with helpful material (1). The second edition of Leslie Olsen and Thomas Huckin's textbook (originally, *Principles of Communication for Science and Technology* [1983]) is titled *Technical Writing and Professional Communication.* The coordination suggests that the two areas are distinct, although connected perhaps by a common theory. But Olsen and Huckin never discuss the difference. (Interestingly, the index contains an entry for "technical communication" but none for "professional writing" or "professional communication.")

The dimensions of the relationships suggested by various authors reflect in many ways, we suspect, their local institutional situations. Sorting through the relationships between professional writing, technical writing/communication, and business writing/communication is more problematic, as the complexity of Figure 3 demonstrates, as new programs emerge. As technical communication and professional writing are made into majors in English departments, institutionally they introduce complications to the identities of the three terms. If professional writing is the major (as it is at Purdue University), are the service programs of business writing and technical writing part of that major, apart from that major and of lesser status, or apart from that major and of similar status? The curricular questions will be answered locally, but what about the conceptual questions about the field? Is *professional writing* just a new name for technical or business communication? Is there a qualitative or conceptual difference?

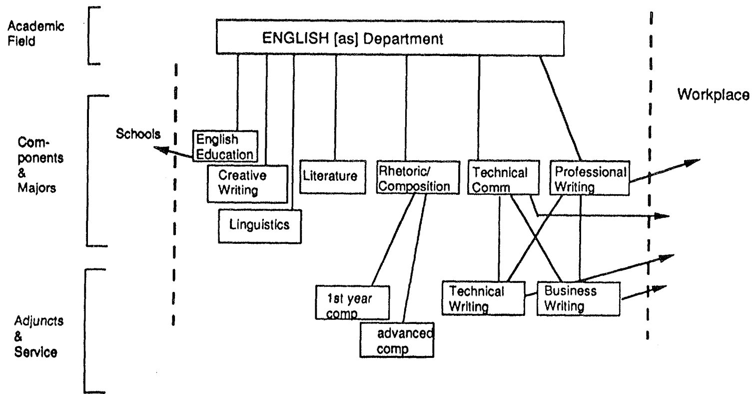

Figure 3. Curricular Geography Reflecting Majors in Professional Writing and Technical Communication

A NEW CURRICULAR GEOGRAPHY FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Our review of technical and business writing discussions of professional writing shows that these traditions struggle with professional writing because of their allegiance to the previous categories, which are often institutionally reflected in their daily teaching. (The predictable result is a notion of professional writing as some version of business and/or technical writing.) This struggle could be regarded as a developmental point where a dominant paradigm is beginning to show signs of strain.

We recognize that professional writing will inevitably be entangled with its predecessors, but we also see its potential to emerge as more than simply a slice or sum of these old parts. Professional writing has the potential for revision of the dominant disciplinary grid; it can occupy a new space and offer a dynamic rather than a static approach to curricular configuration.

Professional Writing as a Major

In conceiving of writing as a *major*, professional writing breaks with the dominant *service* identity assigned to composition.[1] The development of professional writing as an academic entity signals a key

conceptual shift: from the traditional notion of writing as ancillary to some other subject matter (i.e., writing as service to some other set of concerns—whether business, engineering, literature, or rhetoric/composition) to a recognition of writing as a discipline in its own right (i.e., a view that sees writing itself as a specialty area and as a subject of study).

The introduction of the undergraduate professional writing major, a development that even composition has not widely achieved, necessarily causes relationships to change because it invests professional writing with an institutional position, a program with enough importance to be called a major. At the same time, even majors can continue their service functions and continue to be seen in that service role by some in the university. Further, because departments often supervise more than one major, having a major does not necessarily imbue a group with a budget (one key to status in the academy), nor does it ensure that graduate courses will be taught in the area; the major might be a minor player in a large department. That is true for professional writing despite data Richard Ohmann provides that demonstrate the clear shifts in English studies: Majors in English (meaning literature) and allied fields are down 50% or more since the 1960s, department faculties have shrunk, only 15-40% of job seekers find permanent employment in English, and students studying composition have risen from 40% of English department enrollments in the late 1960s to 60% of enrollments in the late 1980s (10). At Purdue University, the number of professional writing majors within English has grown from its first class of 3 in 1986 to about 120 in 1992.

But the status of major is institutionally and curricularly important. When a group has a major, it can develop and control the content of a series of courses for undergraduates, it can argue for new staff and determine their qualifications, it can defensibly conduct research in that area for the purposes of tenure and promotion, and it can argue for graduate programs to educate the faculty to be hired in other like majors. These activities enable the field to grow.

Professional Writing as a Research Field[2]

As a research field, professional writing today resembles the status of general composition studies in the early 1980s, when a group of researchers began to identify their work as constituting a field or discipline focused on the study of composition (Lauer; Phelps, "Do-

main"; Lauer and Lunsford).[3] Research into writing in the workplace has fueled the research efforts of those in professional writing since Odell and Goswami edited *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (1985). By reviewing other earlier efforts to study the writing needs of professionals in the workplace (primarily through survey), discussing research methodology as well as pedagogy, and reporting on actual workplace studies, the articles in that volume articulate an agenda for researchers that has been energetically embraced by scholars. As we begin the 1990s, research on workplace writing is prominently featured in technical and business journals, as well as in *Written Communication* and as part of collections on writing in the disciplines (Bazerman and Paradis; Matalene). Further, at least two new collections of workplace research have been published in 1993: Rachel Spilka's *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives* and Nancy Roundy Blyler and Charlotte Thralls's *Professional Communication: The Social Perspective.*

Several concerns permeate the research. First, although much research focuses on professionals who write, a concern with the professional or career writer (Couture)—that is, the person whose job responsibility involves the design, testing, and development of documents in the workplace—is increasingly woven through the newer research. Second, many of the researchers have begun to challenge an exclusive focus on "writing" (Spilka, "Orality"; Kleimann), in part because they see writing as part of a fabric of communicating at work. Third, researchers are interested in how teams collaborate inside their organizations (see Morgan and Bosley).

The questioning of whether writing at work can be studied in isolation from other types of workplace communication feeds into another discussion. *Writing* is now in fact a disputed term (which partly explains why many programs turn to *communication* instead—although we see that as no less problematic). Mark Haselkorn discusses how the jobs of writers in the computer industry are shifting in ways that expand the notion of what writing means into a number of new areas—usability testing and programming training modules, to name two. He contends that the future will reshape the jobs of writers in technical industries—even to the point of not calling them *writers* anymore—although they will have the same basic responsibilities: "to assure that the user is able to complete those tasks which he or she wants to do and which the machine is designed to accomplish" (3-13). William Horton predicts that there will be no technical com-

municators by the year 2001, meaning that the job title *technical communicator* is becoming obsolete. Horton backs his claim by noting that new job titles are emerging that capture better the increased responsibilities of technical communicators: technical publications specialist, information developer, usability specialist, information designer, user education specialist. Whatever position researchers take on the definition of writing, these developments have changed the scope of writing for most participants. Increasingly, the notion of writing is expanding to include visual meaning, layout, and electronic delivery. We see these developments as charting a future course for the field.

Sources of Authority: Rhetoric Theory and Workplace Practice

A key concern for any field in the act of constituting itself is the question of the source of its authority. Two common sources of authority for professional writing discussions have been rhetoric theory and the workplace—and at times these two sources have conflicted. We acknowledge the value of both authorities but also observe that professional writing is constructing its own authorities distinct from either of these others.

Clearly, we do not see rhetoric as only theory and professional writing as only the application of that theory. Certainly professional writing borrows from rhetoric theory—and rhetoric theory may even be its chief source of theory. But those doing research in professional writing have long recognized the inadequacies of conventional rhetoric theory. Professional writing researchers have drawn on other conceptual areas as well: human factors, information design, linguistics, visual theory, management theory, publishing, and empirical observation of the workplace itself. By drawing on these other conceptual areas, researchers have begun to show how other fields provide perspectives currently missing from rhetoric theory.[4]

Others see professional writing as constituted through its connections with business or industry—and sketch a vision of the field in terms of a negotiation between the university and the workplace (Couture et al.). Harrison and Debs view the technical writer as a "boundary spanner" (a fancier version of the STC metaphor of the technical writer as a bridge). Opposed to this, Carolyn Miller sees technical writing as the application of rhetoric theory in the work-

place. She conceives of curriculum in terms of using rhetoric theory to establish principles (the "shoulds") for technical writing. Miller views technical writing as "practical action," as an area linking "practical education"—the goal of which is vocational training—with "liberal education"—the goals of which are cultural awareness/critique and personal development. The field, then, promotes "reflection-in-action" (Schön).

Such a view ruptures several of the dominant binaries supporting more conventional notions of technical and business writing: chiefly, university versus workplace and theory versus practice. Because it occupies a terrain where these conventional borders are breached, we might consider the ways in which professional writing is a postmodern and/or feminist field. In fact Phelps points out that the very notion of field may be changing in the postmodern era (*Composition*). She suggests a view of fields not so much as discrete areas of knowledge but rather as defined by overlapping and interconnected spaces. In her analysis of composition as a postmodern field, Phelps sketches a notion of a field as having open borders, as dynamic—and as less stable and less well-defined than conventional notions of field.

Another feature of the postmodern field might be its view of knowledge (Lyotard). In the university, the more conventional epistemic view sees knowledge as information, facts, and understanding about a certain realm of subject matter. Knowledge is truth and—at least in the realm of science, certitude. Postmodern fields, like composition, promote different kinds of knowledge. One sort—commonly called *productive* or *procedural* knowledge—stresses *knowing how* (rather than *knowing that*). Of course fields that promote *knowing how* run afoul of the conventional binaries: *Knowing how* is a technical sort of knowledge that falls on the wrong side of the theory-practice binary. On the other hand, a view of *knowing how* that includes both theory and practice as necessary components, that in fact denies that they are separate components (as does Schön's term "reflection-in-action"), represents a shifting notion of what constitutes a field (Sullivan and Porter). Professional writing may well have such a status. Writing has long suffered in the twentieth-century university from the view of its status as a procedural skill rather than as knowledge in the scientific or epistemic sense. The development of the professional writing major is testimony to an acceptance, at least in some quarters, of the worthy status of procedural knowledge.

What Might the Professional Writing Curriculum Look Like?

A professional writing curriculum that strives to occupy the space we sketch for it would offer undergraduate courses in some if not all of these areas: publications management, writing for the computer industry, technical and business writing, desktop publishing, document design, hypermedia, style and editing, electronic publishing, research methods and resources, information retrieval, usability, and oral communication. A key component of such a program would be internships and co-ops, which provide a necessary link between the academic and workplace sites. Of course particular programs should design their curriculum with local conditions in mind: What are the needs of the students? What resources (faculty, computer labs, support staff) are available? Our point in offering this list is to show a vision of professional writing positioning itself at the juncture of new writing technologies (e.g., hypermedia). Other areas that might provide valuable courses (now in the position of adjunct to professional writing) might include rhetoric, linguistics, creative writing, technical graphics, computer technology/programming, information science, human factors, management, and communication theory.

How Is Professional Writing Distinct from Other Programs?

Figure 4 shows our vision of the geographical status of professional writing in its relationship to other academic programs. The fields represented by circles—professional writing, professional communication, technical communication, instructional design—represent more recently developed academic programs that fall in the interstices of older academic territories. Instructional design, for instance, is a new territory bridging the gap between graphic design, education, and computer technology (and other media). Similarly, professional writing occupies a space transversing English (with its focus on written language), graphics (with its focus on visual media), and computer technology (with its focus on the computer as communication medium). What we term *professional communication* might have a slightly different focus from *professional writing*, emphasizing more oral (and aural) aspects.

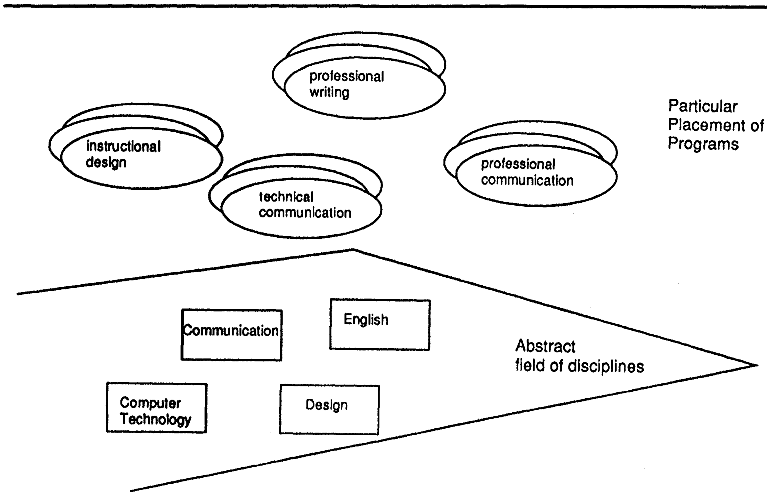

Figure 4. A Curricular Geography for Emerging Majors in the Communication of Information

We offer Figure 4 as a postmodern and/or feminist vision of territoriality (see Lyon). Why postmodern or feminist? Because the fields represented by the circles represent practical strategies that are responses to, perhaps even criticisms of, conventional and established disciplinary spaces (represented by boxes). The plane for the circular fields represents what happens locally; that plane is the surface of particularity, the visible curricular terrain that changes from school to school. Traditionally, that terrain has been governed by the presumed supremacy of the disciplinary plane, which privileges static conceptual notions of disciplines (represented by the lower plane). Partly, the move we are advocating is to assign the particular plane a more competitive status, to recognize it as important and significant to the disciplinary realm, not merely as a local or momentary instantiation of it.

English is an academic discipline, professional writing is a field but also, in this diagram, a curricular strategy, a response to conventional views of disciplinarity. An important feature of professional writing in this view is its dynamic and local nature: Notice that the circles are drawn in a manner that indicates movement—in short, they jiggle, they shake, they even migrate—which is our attempt to illustrate that

professional writing is defined differently at different institutions—although we argue that it has some common features and strategies, it is constructed in terms of local conditions, and it can change with a fair degree of rapidity. We certainly do not want to suggest that disciplines do not change—they certainly do—but they perhaps change generationally, in some cases at glacial speed.

Emerging computer technologies are playing a key role in these conceptions. Electronic network technology, for instance, challenges the traditional binary between spoken and written language (and, thus, the traditional division between the departments of English and speech/communication). The development of hypertext and hypermedia is forcing us to expand our definition of writing to notice the interdependency of the verbal, the visual (both the static and the animated versions), and the aural. To a great extent, professional writing is a major born to handle these writing technologies—or, at least, to handle these technologies from the point of view of writing—that can fall between the cracks of the traditional curricular arrangements.

Within the department of English, one common approach to distinguishing writing types is by genre—for instance, to oppose belletristic and expository or, within business and technical writing, to distinguish between proposals, memos, letters, and reports. An alternative configuration would distinguish writing according to place or "forum" (Porter ch. 7). We draw the following distinctions as possibilities:

professional writing	=	writing for organizational forums; stress on corporate authorship
creative writing	=	writing outside organizational forums (freelancing, whether "literary" or not); stress on individual authorship
journalism	=	writing for public and mass-media forums
writing in the academic disciplines	=	writing for disciplinary forums (i.e., to contribute to disciplinary knowledge)

How Is Professional Writing Different from Technical Communication?

A more subtle problem is the question of the relationship between professional writing and what is commonly called technical communication. Are these simply two names for the same thing—or do the two names signify an important difference in emphasis? Although the

two areas have considerable overlap and might share many of the same courses, we see an important difference in emphasis between professional writing and technical communication. We see professional writing as more closely allied with English as a field, focusing more on writing and promoting a more general humanities perspective. Writing—as itself an activity requiring procedural knowledge—is the specialization, as opposed to the technology (or to the fusion of the technical and the verbal), employed in the activity of communicating technical knowledge, the specialization of technical communication. Thus the professional writing major emphasizes gaining knowledge about project management and about the production of texts (including electronic ones) and employs theories of audience to aid in writing for a variety of purposes and disciplines. By contrast, the technical communication major emphasizes gaining knowledge in a technical area and employs a number of media in the service of communicating the knowledge of a technical field to others in that field or to the public. Both majors recognize that they must constantly be learning about the content of their projects, but only the technical communication major is required to have experience in technical coursework. The professional writer maintains more of the general humanities approach, and this opens the door to a broader constituency: writing for the arts and public discourse, to name two.

Both majors recognize that writing is central, but the technical communication major is more likely to be trained in other media as well. To the extent that *communication* in that term is due to linkage with communication departments, the technical communication major may be trained to view writing as one of the communication technologies. A further difference that may arise from linkage with communication or English departments involves the rhetorical theories grounding the majors' teachings of audience: Generally, English departments are informed by rhetorics for written discourse, and communication departments are informed by rhetorics for spoken discourse. In practice, these distinctions may be very fine, particularly in institutions housing both majors (Carnegie-Mellon, for example), where professional writers and technical communicators share a number of classes, a common set of rhetorical theories, and work closely together on projects. In other institutions, where technical communication is its own department (e.g., Clarkson University, University of Washington, University of Minnesota), the distance between technical communication and professional writing can be pronounced.

Whose Interests Does Professional Writing Serve?

One criticism leveled at the traditional business and technical writing courses is that they serve to instill and maintain the ideological interests of a dominant self-interested capitalistic and/or technocratic system. (The same charge has been leveled at general composition courses.) Our answer to this charge is to admit that it can and does happen—but that that outcome is determined on the particular level, not on the disciplinary plane. The outcome depends on how instruction is designed and implemented and on where, exactly, professional writing chooses to position itself. In the Professional Writing Program at Purdue University, our goal is to educate students who are advocates not solely for their companies, but mainly for their readers: to educate audience advocates, in other words, who write for the betterment of people, whether they are within the same organization or outside it. The role of the professional writer, then, is not to better represent the company to the public but, rather, to help the company better understand the needs and interests of the public. This ethical stance characterizes an area that situates itself as a profession (in Friedson's sense) and promotes a humanities perspective toward its activities.

We are also well aware that this sort of posturing can all too easily drift into the kind of public relations doublespeak for which corporations have long been accused—and we can all too easily risk becoming party to it. We can resist such complicity by our approach to curriculum design. At Purdue, we attempt to teach professional writing as an act of mutual negotiation, with the professional writing student in the role of arbitrator between an organization and the public or between members of the same organization. This positioning may recall, but is not exactly like, the STC metaphor of the technical writer as a bridge or, as others have viewed it, as translator or "boundary spanner" (Harrison and Debs 6). We see the bridge and translator metaphors as too passive: the professional writer as static object or medium for the transfer of information from one place to another (Karis). The arbitrator or negotiator metaphor, on the other hand, indicates a more aggressive role: The professional writer works for better mutual understanding and more ethical choices.

Thus we position our view of professional writing in the midst of an ongoing debate about writing instruction generally. On the one

side are those who stress technical proficiency and career preparation, who believe that writing instruction should help prepare students to be successful participants in the system. On the other side are those who feel that we should prepare students to critique and change the system. Our curricular vision does not see these two competing aims as necessarily incompatible. We see the professional writing curriculum as one site for change.[5]

CONCLUSION

Professional writing is a newly developing field whose precise definition is being constituted locally. And yet, despite its local and seemingly indeterminate nature, we can identify several features that make the field distinctive:

- It is concerned especially with writing within the parameters of organizations (i.e., workplace writing).
- It draws on rhetorical theory of language and persuasion, and theories of composition/writing, but it also draws on resources from a variety of disciplines not typically associated with rhetoric/composition (e.g., human-computer interaction studies, graphic design, typography, computer technology).
- It focuses especially on the roles that various technologies (especially computer-aided publishing) play in composing processes; in fact, *publishing*—not *composing*—is its operative term.
- Its focus of interest is mainly the career writer, the professional whose job responsibility is mainly the design, testing, and development of documents. (This orientation is different from that of traditional technical and business writing, whose orientation is not so much "the professional writer" as "the professional who writes.")

Our claim is that professional writing is an emerging field—its status is under review right now precisely because it is emerging—that focuses on the role of writing in the workplace, both by specialists in writing itself and by specialists in other areas who write in the workplace. The English curriculum has long provided assistance to professionals in this latter category (through the business and technical writing service courses), but professional writing as a major is now establishing a slightly different emphasis as it is beginning to prepare professionals in the former. The exact boundaries of this field may always be a little fuzzy, but we see that as a strength. And even with

some fuzziness, we can still locate a general terrain representing an identity—defined by a set of practices, an emerging body of research and theory, and an academic curriculum.

Whether or not professional writing will or should remain institutionally connected to the department of English will, like most practical decisions, be decided locally, depending on negotiations with and within departments of English. Departments that firmly hold to a literature view may support nominal professional writing programs —but will programs viewed as merely adjuncts be granted sufficient resources (or respect) or be able to adapt to developing technologies and changing constituencies? Will their faculty be sufficiently supported? Will they have *any* faculty doing research in professional writing? In departments that hold to other views discussed in this article, professional writing will perhaps have more favored, but still subordinate, status.

The view of professional writing that we sketch in this article calls for full curricular status and resources for professional writing. Whether or not such a version of professional writing can comfortably inhabit the department of English will depend on the ability and willingness of English departments to grant professional writing full and equal status as a type of English major. Overall we see some advantage, for both English and professional writing, to maintaining a continued interconnection. Whether or not departments of English can *afford* to develop such a program, especially in an era of limited financial resources, remains a significant question. However, our view is this: Given what happened to departments of English in the 1970s, can they afford *not* to develop such a program? Especially because we *are* in an era of austerity, professional writing may be a particularly powerful curricular option.

NOTES

1. Like composition, professional writing in the form of business and technical writing courses has had a long tradition as an important service component of the university. Business writing courses date back to the early twentieth century. The first university-level business writing course was taught in 1902 at the University of Illinois (Weeks 202), and the course became a mainstay at several notable universities after World War I. According to David Russell, "by 1930, more than half of all undergraduate business schools required such a course" (127). Traditionally, such courses were defined in terms of the schools they served (engineering, business) and in terms of genre: Technical and business writing referred to the creation of certain sorts of documents—

memos and business letters (sales letters, bad news letters, credit adjustment letters, etc.), technical reports, proposals, technical instructions—that the working professional in business or industry would be likely to write. The curricular space allotted to writing courses was firmly limited to two courses: the first-year composition course (which everybody took) was supposed to teach general writing skills; the follow-up "professional" course was business writing (in the business school) or technical writing (in the engineering school).

2. We might well ask what makes a *profession* or *field*. Friedson points out that professions (which he contrasts with ocupations) have been characterized by two general features: (a) acquisition and schooled application of an esoteric and complex body of knowledge and skill, and (b) orientation toward serving the needs of the public, with particular emphasis on ethical or altruistic approaches to clients. The historically dominant professions—clergy, law, and medicine—come from centuries of privileged university status, with newer professions deemed *occupational*. The industrial revolution birthed hundreds of occupational groups that lay claim to *profession*. They usually have university ties, which they develop over a period of time and, often, through a difficult initiation (ch. 1-2).

Lipson offers criteria for a *field* when she offers a social theory for technical writing. Examining several technical fields, she argues that a field is characterized by a substantial theoretical orientation mastered by its practitioners; a set of procedures, values, and attitudes, instilled and reinforced during intensive socialization; and autonomy in determining who can practice, what the standards and conditions for practice are, and in overseeing practitioners (8). Other features that recur in various definitions of professions include specialized academic preparation (courses, majors, graduate programs), specialized jobs, a body of professional knowledge, an articulated research agenda, and academic forums (journals, electronic discussion groups, conferences).

3. Although composition had a long history as a vital service course in the university, the subject of composition had never been seriously considered as a worthy academic area of research inquiry, nor had its teachers been considered specialists, before the pioneering efforts of a handful of scholars in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Three developments encouraged a changed status for composition: (a) the recovery of a historical tradition for composition within rhetoric, (b) the development and articulation of research methods (historical, theoretical, and empirical) appropriate to the study of composition (e.g., Lauer and Asher), and (c) the discovery by composition researchers of the significance of work in other disciplines (e.g., cognitive and developmental psychology). This changed status manifested itself in the creation of new graduate programs devoted to the study of rhetoric and composition (like those at Purdue and Ohio State) and of new forums for research, such as the journal *Rhetoric Review* and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Writing and Rhetoric monograph series (see Lauer 24).

4. For example, professional writing is contributing in particular to theoretical perspectives on collaboration and visual design. Although rhetoric/composition has had much to say about collaboration, rhetoric and composition researchers have not yet noticed a considerable body of research in management that pertains directly to collaboration. They have not noticed it perhaps because it is labeled as *management* (or *project management*), but such work addresses concerns vital to our understanding of collaboration in the workplace. Research published in a special issue of *Technical Communication* (Morgan and Bosley) and in a collection edited by Lay and Karis pushes discussion of collaboration well beyond where it has been in general rhetoric and

composition journals. Similarly, rhetoric/composition has been notorious for ignoring the rhetorical effects of visual elements—and important research on the rhetoric of visuals (Porter and Sullivan). Those in professional writing are aware of the importance of work done by Tufte, Buchanan, Kinross, and others—and of the relevance of this work to writing. Perhaps because rhetoric/composition conceives of writing as referring to words only—and design, layout, and visuals as simply ways to dress up words—it has ignored the contribution of visual theory. Professional writing sees visuals as more than merely style or delivery (i.e., packaging of words) but also as a key facet of invention and arrangement.

5. Obviously, such a vision represents a relatively optimistic view of systems, one that is not likely to be acceptable to those who feel that substantial change will ultimately not be achievable except through sustained direct resistance.

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